



SEKHEMET



August 1995



issue 9

magazine of anarcha-feminist federation of aotearoa

ANARCHA-FEMINIST FEDERATION OF AOTEAROA



BEGINNINGS

At the Anarchist Conference in 1991, anarcha-feminism was discussed. From the discussion two groups were established, one in Auckland, and one in Wellington.

SEKHMET

Sekhmet is the magazine of the Anarcha-Feminist Federation of Aotearoa. The name of our zine 'Sekhmet', is taken from Egyptian theology. As Sekhmet is an Egyptian war goddess, we see Sekhmet as a good name for a magazine making war with hierarchies. Articles in Sekhmet do not necessarily represent views of the collective.

WHAT IS ANARCHA-FEMINISM?

An anarcha-feminist is an anarchist who concentrates on feminism or a feminist that uses anarchist theory to achieve women's self determination. So anarcha-feminists have formed women-only groups as we feel it is more productive to work on women's issues in women only groups.

An excellent historical example of anarcha-feminists at work is the group Mujeres Libres (Free Women), the Spanish Anarchist Women of the 1930s. They formed a women-only organisation which was affiliated to the CNT (which was the main force against the fascists etc.). In the heyday of Mujeres Libres there were 160 groups throughout Spain with 20,000 women actively involved. They taught illiterate women to read, provided creches, formed collectivised restaurants and provided health services.



WHAT IS ANARCHISM?

Anarchists want to bring about a free, stateless, and equalitarian society, that is a society which is free of divisions, rank,

and one which is just and fair.

Anarchism is a political set of ideas and beliefs that argues that society should be arranged without set up power and control structures, so that it is without government or rulers.

Anarchism does not mean chaos, disorder, bombs, murder, and robbery. That's what government is all about. Nor does it mean a return to the Stone Age. Anarchists seek away of social life in which nobody is in a position to oppress or exploit, victimise or abuse anyone else. Anarchism is a way of living in which everyone has equal access to resources, ensuring all basic human needs are met. In an anarchist society, order is achieved through free agreements between various individuals, groups, and organisations. These agreements are made freely to allow the attainment of the wide variety of human needs and desires, as well as organising aspects of production and consumption.

FEMINISM

Feminism is a term widely used today that refers to many different movements and groups. The central aim of feminism is usually to achieve more equity and equality between the sexes. The different ways in which women have done this has been categorised by the different ideological approaches and focuses women have taken, so that feminism ranges from Marxist feminism to lesbian-separatist feminism and everything in between. Anarcha-feminists challenge the patriarchal order, which includes government and any other hierarchical organisation. In the past, women have tended to work in non-hierarchical ways to ensure rights for women.

Feminism also means breaking away from subservient conditioning. Peggy Kornegger considers that "women frequently speak and act as 'intuitive anarchists, that is we approach or verge on a complete denial of all patriarchal thought and organisation. Living within and being conditioned by an authoritarian society often prevents us from making that all important connection between feminism and anarchism. When we say we are fighting

the patriarchy, it isn't always clear to all of us that that means fighting all leadership, all patriarchy, all government, and the very idea of authority itself. Our impulses toward collective work and small leaderless groups have been anarchistic, but in most cases we haven't called them that by name. And that is important, because understanding anarchism as anarchism could spring women out of reformism and stopgap measures into a revolutionary confrontation with the basic nature of authoritarian politics. If we want to 'bring down the patriarchy', we need to talk about anarchism to know exactly what that means, and to use that framework to transform ourselves and the structure of our daily lives. Feminism doesn't mean female corporate power or a women president: it means no corporate power, and no presidents. The equal rights amendment will not transform society; it only gives women the 'right' to plug into a hierarchical economy. Challenging sexism means challenging all hierarchy - economic, political, and personal. And that means an anarchist feminist

sekhmet

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Sekhmet is produced by the Katipo Collective, an independent, autonomous collective based in Wellington. Opinions expressed in this magazine do not necessarily represent the views of the collective. Contributions of articles and pictures are always welcome.

THE PREMENSJURAL RAG

Keeping You Up With The Latest

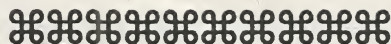
EDITORIAL

I've just been sitting in the Anarchist bookshop wondering why the Anarcha-feminist movement in Aotearoa isn't bigger, why there aren't more womyn involved. I think one problem is that when the movement is fairly small, it really limits how much you can do (and everyone has other commitments), which in turn limits our ability to get in touch with other womyn. I've also been reading Emma Goldman's biography (yes, another dead Russian), but I'm pretty amazed at how full-on her life was compared to mine. It reminds me of something that Gaye (now in Christchurch) once said: 'You can't go to a meeting once a month and expect to see anarchism in your lifetime'.

Enough of me waffling on, the good news is that *Sekhmet* has reached the electronic age, and is now on available on e-mail! (just e-mail us at aaa@numb.wgtn.planet.co.nz) However, the electronic form doesn't have all the pretty pictures etc., so the print version is still well worth buying. Other good news is that anarcha-feminist pamphlets, books and magazines are selling very well in the anarchist bookshop, making up about 50% of turnover. If you're passing, check out the bookshop - it's called *Anarchist Books* and is in *The Freedom Shop* which is located at 272 Cuba St. The *NORML* shop also shares *The Freedom Shop*, which has been totally refurbished and is now bright green! It stocks lots of groovy anarcha-feminist books, pamphlets, hats and T-shirts, as well as anarchist goods. It's also very close to the Katipo Collective, who share an office with the C.E.C. anarchists in the *WellingtonPeace and Environment Centre*, 264 Cuba St. So do come in and say hi!

Do you have any letters, articles, drawings or poems relating to anarcha-feminism that you would like to send in to *Sekhmet*? They'd be really welcome; as *Sekhmet* should ideally mingle the ideas of lots and lots of womyn! Thank you to all the womyn who sent letters in for this issue!

SPIDERS ON THE MOON - KATIPO COLLECTIVE OUT AND ABOUT



April 14-17th, 1995 - Anarchist Conference

The 1995 Anarchist Conference included two workshops on Anarcha-Feminism, one women only, one for both men and women. Both were really well attended. Among other things, we discussed setting up new Anarcha-Feminist groups! The Conference also included a Performance Cafe on the Sunday night, at which many anarcha-feminists performed!

May 1st, 1995 - Freedom Shop

The anarchist/NORML bookshop, extensively renovated, reopened on the anniversary of the Haymarket massacre.

May 20th, 1995 - Lesbian Studies Conference

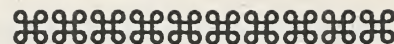
The Hags had a very creative and successful performance at the annual Lesbian Studies Conference held at Victoria University. Johanna was rollerskating in a tutu, while Jody balanced a tray of sweets on her stomach!

May 25th, 1995 - Women's Centre Collective meeting

A group of Wellington feminists want to establish a Women's Centre in Wellington. The aim is to provide a space which is safe and welcoming to all women, and which can be used for women's organisations, events, and activities. Three groups were established to focus on funding, finding a suitable location, and planning. The group will meet again in three months time, and may be contacted via The Women's Desk (04) 355 7080.

June 1st, 1995 - Social and Games Evening

Yes, anarcha-feminists can have fun, too! Around 30 women met at Crossways Hall for a very successful potluck dinner and games evening.



We hung the Katipo Collective banner over the crucifix on the wall, and had a great time. Particularly exciting was the number of new women present! The evening finished on a spiritual note with an Indian chant.

June 1995, Women's International Day for Disarmament

Despite uncertain weather, members of the Katipo Collective joined many other women to protest against military spending and militarisation.

June 17, 1995 - Paekakariki Women's Dance

Another great performance by the Hags.

June 21, 1995 - Winter Solstice Celebration

Part of the Katipo Collective attended the Winter Solstice Celebration coordinated by the Lower Hutt Women's Centre. We met on Petone beach on a clear night, paddled in the sea, ate chips, and toasted crumpets. Later we went back to Lower Hutt Women's Centre, where we ate more yummy food and met lots of really cool women. Thanks to Lower Hutt Women's Centre for organising it!

For those who would like to receive any information, please contact the Katipo Collective. Our postal address is P.O. Box 14-156, Kilbirnie, Wellington. The Katipo Collective also meets every Tuesday at the Sharp building, 1st floor, 264 Cuba Street, Wellington. Contact us on (04)389-1231

THE PREMENSJURAL RAG

Keeping You Up With The Latest

around the planet....

Guatemalan Union Leader Beaten and Raped

Flor de Maria, a leader in the Festras Labor federation of food workers was forcibly taken off a bus on her way to work and drugged. She was taken to a house and then beaten and raped three times. A week later, she got a telephone call from a male caller, who asked in a disguised voice: 'Did you like the nice things that we did to you?' She promptly hung up. A week later, she got another call in the same disguised voice.

Since late March, she had been receiving death threats at her home, because she had been active in focusing international attention on worker rights violations. Last year she attended U.S. congressional hearings on working conditions in Central America. She also met with striking textile workers in Pennsylvania whose jobs were being threatened by low wages and lack of unions in Guatemala.

Please write to the following that Flora De Maria receives all necessary protection and that a rapid investigation into the threats and violence against her are made:

President Ramiro de Leon Carpio, National Palace, Guatemala City, Guatemala.

Labor Minister Gladys Morfin, Ministry of Labor, 14 Calle 5-49, zone 1 Guatemala City, Guatemala.

Italy's Homemakers Form a Trade Union!

Italy's homemakers decided they'd had enough of slaving in the kitchen and bringing up the children with little recognition or reward. What they needed was a trade union. The 800,000 - strong National Housewives Federation, formed 13 years ago to press for women's rights to pensions and benefits, voted last month to turn itself from a pressure group into a union. Last year Italy's constitutional court ruled that housework had as much economic value as work done outside the home. 'We are fed up with being ignored,' said Gasparrini, the federation's founder. 'The popular concept that only work done outside the home can be considered real work with a capital W has been banished,' she said. The homemakers say that once politicians are in power, they forget their promises.

Animal info



News for Animal Liberation

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- * re-incarnation of Bent Edge
- * designer clothes from recycled fabrics
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- * anarchist and anarchy-feminist zines

Greenham Women on trial

From July 3rd to 7th 1995, eight women from the Yellow Gate women's peace camp, Greenham Common, UK, will be representing themselves at Reading Crown Court. This is an appeal of a verdict of 'guilty' to a charge of 'criminal damage' at A W E Aldermaston.

The women are defending themselves under Section 5 2(b) of the Criminal Damage Act, which allows for a defence of lawful excuse to cause damage to prevent a greater crime being committed. We argue that not only is this greater crime of nuclear destruction imminent at any moment, but radioactive contamination of the land around Aldermaston is happening now. We have documented evidence to provide for this.

Women are also using the Genocide Act in their defence, arguing that establishments such as the A W E Aldermaston are in serious contravention of this Act.

Common Law is also being used, and maps produced to show that there are public footpaths across the base which have fences barring their way and that we have the right to gain access to these.

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

Sekhmet no 9, August 1995

Eileen Cassidy

interview with a Wellington anarcha-feminist

We're in Eileen Cassidy's small but colourful flat in Berhampore. The table is pushed back, the interview is ready to begin! Eileen was born in Aotearoa 78 years ago, and has been involved in solidarity movements in various parts of the world.

How did you first become interested in Anarchism?

From my teenage years in the depression I was interested in politics; it was a time when people were very

politically aware. I feel that if people can keep the memory of the salient features of their youth, and relate them to the present day, it gives you a new understanding, and stops you growing old. In 1936 I was very impressed with the Spanish anarchists, and emotionally concerned with the Spanish civil war. A major factor was my disenchantment with politicians of all sorts, and from all countries. Movements must come from the people themselves - for example the Spanish affinity groups, where the people felt a bond of comradeship and unity.

People think I'm a dear little old lady....perhaps not so dear....

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How do you feel the anarchist movement is different from other movements

Through knowing young Wellington anarchists, I've regained something of the spirit I had in my teens and twenties. It gives me hope for the new generation - I can see that spirit continuing. Working for the common good creates a common bond between young and old.

We were wondering if you wanted to talk about your past political involvement?

I've worked for two deputy prime ministers, which gave me a good understanding about how the parliamentary system works. I was a secretary and did reporting, but began to get very disillusioned from the mid-seventies on. It became obvious how corruption was setting in in all governments. Until I was in my fifties, I thought that Labour was concerned for people, but in my late fifties, I became a Communist, and joined the Worker's Communist League. I also belonged to the China Friendship Society.

How did you leave the Communist League?

The Communist group began to break up in the mid-eighties. There was quite a large group of strong and knowledgeable women who formed a women's group focussing on gender issues. The men formed a men's group who discussed male domination. Later people focussed more on practical work, and unemployment issues. I moved around quite a lot, and became very involved in solidarity groups, the anti-apartheid movement, Corso, and Oxfam. I went to university at 55 because I was very interested in history and international affairs, and to get a bit more propelling along, not feeling so aimless. After teaching for 5-6 years, I did a Diploma in teaching English as a second language, and went to Palestine for nine months, and to Eritrea. Eritrea, in particular, gave me a real fillip - it certainly was a country where things were happening with the cooperation of the people. It

Eileen Cassidy: interview with a Wellington anarcho-feminist (cont)



showed me what people could achieve if they are united for a common goal.

Would you align it to anarchism?

Reflecting on it, I can see that it gave me an understanding of anarchism, because I could see how it worked in practice. A lot of people say anarchism won't work, because they don't have confidence in people.

What about your experience in Palestine?

I felt the Palestinians had very big obstacles to overcome from the past. Israel just came onto the scene when colonialism was being dismantled with a new form of colonisation. It showed me how propaganda, and media, can distort a situation. Injustice gets me so worked up! My involvement with the solidarity groups propelled me more into politics.

What about Spanish anarchism?

I was 19 at the time, and wanted to dash off and do something in Spain, but my mother pointed out that I didn't have the language or any useful skills! I wrote to Noam Chomsky about my interest in Spain, and he said that he got involved at the age of ten, writing an article about Spain. It was one of the things that made a major impression on me.

What other things made a big impression on you?

One was the battle of Staligrad, during the Second World War. I was really impressed about how the people got together and supported each other. The other was Eritrea, one of the few countries that really seemed to personify a democratic spirit.

Have you been involved much with feminist issues?

Without being in a feminist movement, I call myself a feminist. In fact I have been called a feminist by two or

three rather irate gentlemen! Since childhood I have been a committed feminist. I was inspired by the example of my mother, her practical and organisational skills, her ability to get people together and have fun, and her strong sense of injustice. There weren't many feminist groups at the time, but I always took it for granted that women were really capable. I was very concerned with women being limited in employment. In the thirties I was involved in a Labour women's group in Upper Hutt. I always had lots of women friends, and was involved in women's issues mainly through my friends. Later I became involved with Reclaim the Night and other issues, through my young female friends.

How did you find the 1995 Sydney conference?

I only went to one workshop on anarchosyndicalism because I went to the big public meeting for Noam Chomsky. Chomsky came across to me a bit like his books - a person full of integrity and sincerity with ironic amusement at people with pretensions. He seemed to typify the spirit of the things he wrote about. I met a lot of young people and I really felt I belonged when I bobbed in. I was impressed by the spirit of oneness and concern for others. These days I keep giving people little talks, keeping in touch, getting a few people involved in anarchism. People think I'm a dear little old lady - perhaps not so dear...

In Aotearoa, anarchism is more associated with young punks...

I was talking to someone at the conference about this, and he said that people should be able to show their differences, not conform to stereotypes. One should not be bound by dogma, but ideally be in a position to question...

HEY DUDES

We know there's lots of incredibly talented women out there with great ideas and lots of energy. The Katipo Collective is feeling a bit stretched - we've lots of ideas but not enough time and people to put them into action. So do any anarcho-fems feel like getting involved with organizing other amazing events - such as anarcho-fem summer camps?/paste-ups?/ whatever?

WHY NOT GET OUT THERE AND DO IT?

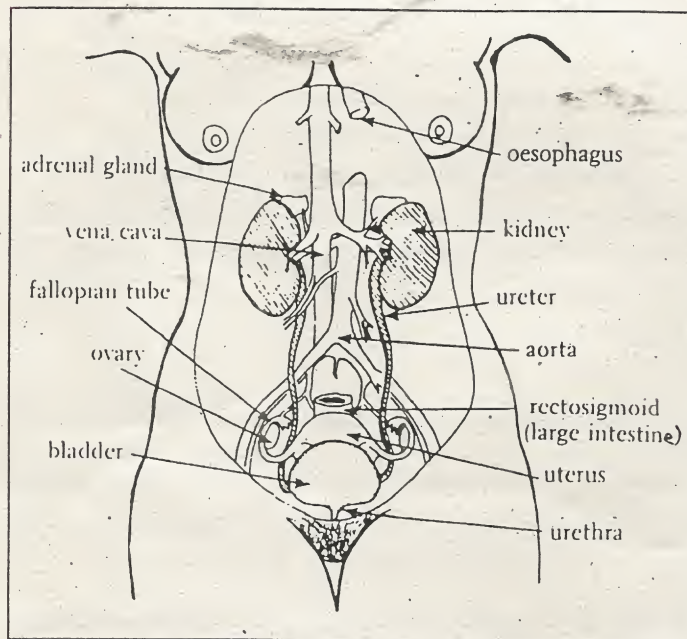
HEALTH TIPS -

All You Ever Wanted To Know About Cystitis

Welcome to womens health tips. This issue as promised deals with cystitis, or urinary tract infections.

You know you have cystitis when you need to wee every few minutes, but urinating is very painful and only a small amount of urine can be passed. As the infection worsens the urine may look cloudy (with pus), or have blood in it. Further symptoms are pain in the lower back, or stomach, chills and fever.

Cystitis is caused by bacteria from the anus getting into the urethra (the tube carrying the urine from the bladder) and the bladder, causing an infection.



Possible causes and prevention.

Pregnancy. Pregnant women are prone to cystitis, because pressure from the foetus can hold some urine back in the bladder and ureters, where bacteria can grow. Pregnant women should shake their hips at the end of urinating to be sure the bladder is emptied.

Stress and a bad diet can predispose you to cystitis. A bout of cystitis could be an indication that you are not looking after yourself. Eat wholefoods and lots of fruit and veges. Be sure to get enough sleep and try to eliminate extra stress from your life. Most importantly drink lots of water, at least 1 - 2 litres of fluids each day, (hey if it's good



A late Medieval woodcut of an abbess as pharmacist. (from *A History of Women in Medicine*, K. C. Hurd-Mead)

enough for Elle MacPherson, it's good enough for you - but don't worry, it won't make you waste away).

Sexually transmitted diseases can cause cystitis symptoms, if you think you may have an S.T.D the sooner you get treatment the better. In this case also improving your diet and drinking lots of fluids will help prevent attacks.

An increase in sexual activity often triggers symptoms (referred to in *Our Bodies Ourselves* as 'honeymoon cystitis'). There are various reasons for this:

- 1) bacteria can be pushed into the urethra and bladder by sexual intercourse. If you have attacks of cystitis after sex this might be what's happening.
 - ▲ try washing the genitals before and after sex
 - ▲ urinating after sex to flush away the bacteria immediately
 - ▲ avoiding activities that could drag bacteria from the anus to the urethra
- 2) rear entry intercourse and/or prolonged clitoral stimulation can bruise the urethra which can allow an infection to start. This could be the cause of a cystitis problem. I suggest that you be wary that these activities may cause cystitis and stop doing them if the activity becomes too rough or painful.

Here are some other things to watch out for:

- tight jeans
- bicycling and horse riding
- some spermicides which can irritate the urethra. You may need to change brands.

- some diaphragms. You may need to change the size, or rim of your diaphragm.
- antiseptics, talcum powder, perfumed soaps, deodorants. Don't use them in the genital area.
- wiping from back to front after going to the toilet. Always wipe yourself from front to back.

Treating an attack.

So what can you do once you've got cystitis? It is important to take action straight away. Drinking a big glass of water is a good start. You may feel scared to drink in case it causes an urge to wee and more pain, but I assure you drinking is the best thing you can do. The more you drink the less it will hurt and if you drink enough you can simply wash the infection right out of your system.

The following treatment plan is derived from various sources (listed at the end of the article).

Step 1. Collect a midstream urine sample in a clean jar. If the infection hasn't eased after 48 hours of self help treatment, or you have a fever, back pain, or blood in the urine, take your sample and see a doctor (these symptoms indicate the infection has spread to the kidneys, which is a more serious problem).

Step 2. Drink. Try to drink a glass of water, or other bland fluids every half hour. Avoid drinking citrus juice.

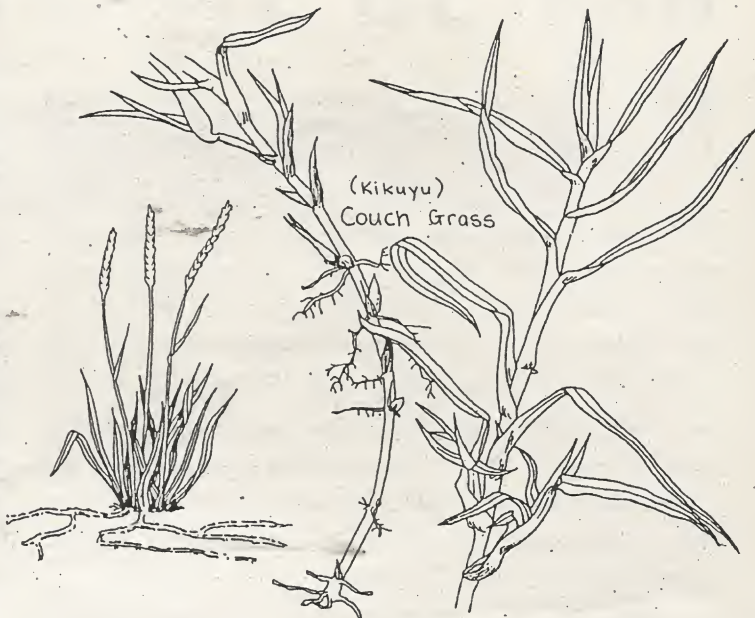
You may find ONE of the following remedies beneficial:

a) 1 tsp of baking soda in a glass of water - drink one every hour for three hours. This makes the urine less acidic and relieves the pain. You can buy *Citravescent* or *Ural* sachets from the chemist which do the same thing.

Note: Anyone with high blood pressure, or a heart complaint, should not take baking soda.

b) Barley Water - can be drunk as often as you like. To make - pour 1 litre of water over 30g of barley grains in a pot. Simmer to reduce liquid by half. Add lemon juice and lemon rind to taste, and strain.

c) Couch Grass Tea - drink 1 cup every 2 to 3 hours. If you can identify couch grass, you can make couch grass tea. Pull it up from the lawn, roots and all. Rinse the soil away, bruise it, put in a pot and cover with boiling water. Simmer for 5 minutes, then strain.



d) Herbal remedy - drink 4 cups a day of the following infusion:

- 1 part borage, *borago officinalis*
- 1 part cleavers, *galium aparine*
- 1 part dandelion, *taraxacum officinale*
- 1 part oatstraw, *avena sativa*
- 1/2 part ginger root, *zingiber officinale*.

Use one handful of the mixture and cover with 1 litre of boiling water in a jar. Infuse, covered for four hours.

OR

e) Homeopaths - make remedies for cystitis also.

Step 3. If you can, go to bed with a hot water bottle at your back and one between your knees, but keep up the drinking.

Step 4. If after 48 hours the infection hasn't eased, you have your undiluted urine sample to take to a doctor.

Sources:

Our Bodies Ourselves
Boston Womens Health Collective
(**highly recommended**)

Cystitis

Pamphlet put out by Public Health Commission and New Zealand Venerological Society

Guide to a Healthy Pregnancy and Childbirth
Auckland Home Birth Association.



All about death



This article is designed primarily to deal with many aspects of the legal and practical details that need to be followed when a person dies in Aotearoa/N.Z. Looking at what is involved when a person dies may help us to be aware of the needs of our families, friends, lovers and of course ourselves in our time of need. Funeral rites and customs surrounding death will vary from culture to culture.

Many studies and observations made about grief conclude that the way in which funerals/ceremonies for a loved one are done make a real difference to the way in which people grieve and how they resolve their feelings. It is also about taking back control over aspects of death and dying. It is about re-examining traditional roles in the area of death as well as examining the role of death in our culture today.

Besides the personal aspects that people may want to pay attention to there are certain state 'legal' requirements that should be followed (to save hassle, trouble and more trauma). Within this legal framework though there is a lot of scope for taking back some measure of control and having a creative personal input. The situation is going to be different for every person, family, friends and lovers, so people will need to pick and choose what is appropriate.

In western culture when a person dies people usually gather to celebrate their life and commiserate their death, in the form of funerals, wakes and memorial services. Maori have traditionally held 'tangi', which is another process again. In Aotearoa/N.Z. burial and cremation are the only two legal options (so no pyres or sky burials). A funeral may be arranged by a funeral director or any other individual, many people have used professionals to organise all aspects of a funeral but this is not necessary as many of the tasks can be done ourselves which can be quite a process but also very healing (which can be a very empowering experience).

For people undertaking to organise a funeral or aspects of a funeral it is important to always ask for as many details and options from the various agencies involved. There are many options available to organisers and many different associated costs and benefits. The person organising the funeral must collect within three days of a person's death these three things for the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages: a death registration form (details about the person who has died); a medical certificate of 'cause of death' (from the person's doctor) and a burial order (from the coroner) before a person can be buried. For more information ask for a form called an RG 28-Guide - for people registering a death. The Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages can be found by asking your local district court.

By law people cannot be buried just anywhere, only in a designated burial area (cemetery or pa). It is possible to apply to bury a person on another piece of land or get land designated as a burial area. To do this ask the Department of Health and your local council (under the 'Burial and Cremation Act 1964'). This is bound to be a lengthy process so don't count on being able to get quick approval (for burying someone in a hurry).

There are also certain hygiene regulations that must be followed, a funeral director or coroner can advise you of this. The circumstances under which a person dies may require an investigation by the coroner, usually this is unnecessary because a person's doctor can provide most of the information needed to complete the medical certificate. A coroner must investigate by law if the person dies: a violent or unnatural death; dies suddenly and the cause is unknown; dies as an inmate of various public institution; dies in prison; dies while in foster care. A person cannot be buried until the coroner issues a burial order. The coroner formally identifies the person; a post mortem may be performed or an inquest may be held.

When told of a death the police make inquiries and report the death and the results of their inquiries to the coroner. The police may arrange for the dead person to go to a mortuary etc, and may be involved in telling the next-of-kin. For many people dealing with the police can be very traumatic, their manner can be very abrupt, uncaring and unsympathetic. Some of this can be attributed to the nature of the bureaucratic process that the law and government make us adhere to. Most people do not know how to deal with death, dying and grief so it is little wonder the police are not very skilled in this area. It is important to be aware that people may need a lot of support in dealing with the police and taking back some control over the death process before it becomes too bureaucratised, impersonalised and institutionalised.

In today's world funeral directors replace traditional women's roles which were very important in integrating death of a loved one in a community. This role is no longer done by women (as traditional caregivers) but is now motivated by money and driven by consumer demand. This has had a huge impact on pakeha culture and the way we deal with integrating death into our lives.

Although following the legal requirements for burial/cremation in Aotearoa/N.Z. may not sound like 'anarchy', finding our own way to celebrate the lives of loved ones and commiserate their deaths is an important kind of self-determination.

Johanna

Sources:

Elizabeth Kubler Ross- On Death and Dying
Marion Barnes- Down Under
Alternative Ceremonies- Funeral Directors Association
NZ (pamphlet)
Before Burial- Department of Justice (pamphlet)

LOUISE MICHEL

"Officers, do not strike her. Be respectful, Judges, be silent. This old madwoman is worth more than you who call her the Michel woman. If you persist, you shall convince me that she is a saint. Why? In her, the flame burns." - Barres, Notebooks, VI, 91.

The Paris Commune, 1871.

One of the leaders is Louise Michel, a forty-year old woman with wild black hair in a shabby black dress and hat. She doesn't yet call herself an anarchist, but passionately supports the Commune as a step towards a society based on "acting according to one's own convictions, and treating oneself and others with justice." In fact, the Commune had a much stronger anarchist element than is generally recognised, with followers of Proudhon and Bakunin being heavily involved.

Louise Michel was born in 1830, the illegitimate daughter of a housemaid and a Bourmont landowner. Exact dates in her life are hard to be sure of, as she usually claimed to be six years younger than she was. Choices for women in 18th century France were limited. Louise refused to marry or enter a convent - the only choice left was to become a schoolteacher. She opened up a private school so she wouldn't have to pay allegiance to the Emperor.

In 1870, Napoleon III declared war on Russia, and Louise helped organise anti-war demonstrations. In March 1871, there was a huge uprising, resulting in the setting up of the Paris Commune. The old government, which had fled to Versailles, declared war on it immediately. Louise put on a soldier's uniform, and joined the 61st battalion. Women who fought encountered a lot of hostility - once Louise was even refused food rations until there was a special order from one of the male leaders.

In May 1871, the Versailles troops invaded Paris. Louise's mother was taken hostage, and Louise surrendered so her mother would be freed. Louise was thrown into prison and eventually put on trial. Most of the imprisoned revolutionaries were very submissive, but Louise caused a sensation by loudly proclaiming her faith in the Commune, and in revolution, and by refusing to appeal her sentence. She did not wish to be reprieved when many of her comrades had been hanged. 'I would prefer death,' she said. Instead, she was deported to Kanaky (New Caledonia). During the nine-month voyage, she thought about the Commune, and the reasons for its defeat. This led to her becoming an anarchist. *'I quickly concluded that good men [sic] in power are incompetent, just as bad men are evil, and therefore it is impossible for liberty to be associated with any sort of power whatsoever.'* On her arrival, she joined the Kanak rebellion against the French. 'They [the Kanaks] were fighting for independence, control over their own lives, and for liberty.'

She showed the rebels how to cut telephone wires, shutting down the entire telecommunications system of Noumea. Despite all this, she was pardoned in 1879, but refused to leave until there was a general amnesty for all the political deportees in 1880. Louise paid for her own ticket to Sydney - once there, the French consul refused to repatriate her! Louise said that she'd stay on in Sydney, and earn money for her ticket by giving public lectures on: the rebellion in New Caledonia; the French administration in Noumea; and the slave trade being carried on under the pretence of providing blacks with job opportunities. The consul changed his mind.

After an ecstatic welcome back to France, Louise began agitating for 'free marriage in which men no longer hold property rights over women.' She encouraged working women to

strike for equal pay. Some of her meetings were pretty full on - once someone threw a table leg at her. 'It will make a fine souvenir,' she said, picking it up.

In March 1881, she addressed a huge unemployed workers demonstration, proclaiming 'We are going to march through Paris together, asking for work, and for bread. Long live the Social Revolution.' She was charged with inciting a mob to forcible entry, theft, and wilful damage. 'All it takes is a black rag and a broom handle,' she said at her trial. 'That's the banner of strikes, and of suffering. The authority of one man is a crime. What we want is the authority of all.'

'All it takes is a black rag and a broom handle...'



Sekhmet no 9, August 1995

Of Goddesses and Natural Women



Louise Michel (continued)

Louise was sentenced to six years jail, but was pardoned two years later. On her release, she became involved in anarchosyndicalism, seeing the general strike as a way to hit 'every industry and every branch of commerce, and finally usher in the Social Revolution

Louise imagined a free world. Cannibalism had vanished, so would capitalism. Technology would mean that a few hours of voluntary labour from each person would produce all the goods we need. She would always refuse to vote. 'Deputies do just one thing, they pass laws to make sure you remain slaves.'

She was not always serious, though - on the bus she liked to chat to some respectable passenger about that dreadful old hag, Louise Michel. As she got off, she would call back over her shoulder, 'Oh, Monsieur, I am Louise Michel.'

She was also noted for her generosity. Once one of her close friends sent Louise money to buy herself a winter blanket, but she gave the money away. Her friend said he'd replace it, providing Louise promised to spend the money on herself. She replied, 'Then you keep your money, because I won't keep that promise!'

For the rest of her life, Louise continued to lead public meetings, and address demonstrations, dividing her time between France and England, but always desperately poor. She became more and more worried by 'the new Marxist church forging its orthodoxy, and its infallible hierarchy.'

On 9 January, 1905, Louise Michel died of double pneumonia on her way back from lecturing about anarchism in Algeria. At her funeral, a speaker said 'You may be dead, but you will survive wherever the Revolution survives.'

Sekhmet no 9, August 1995

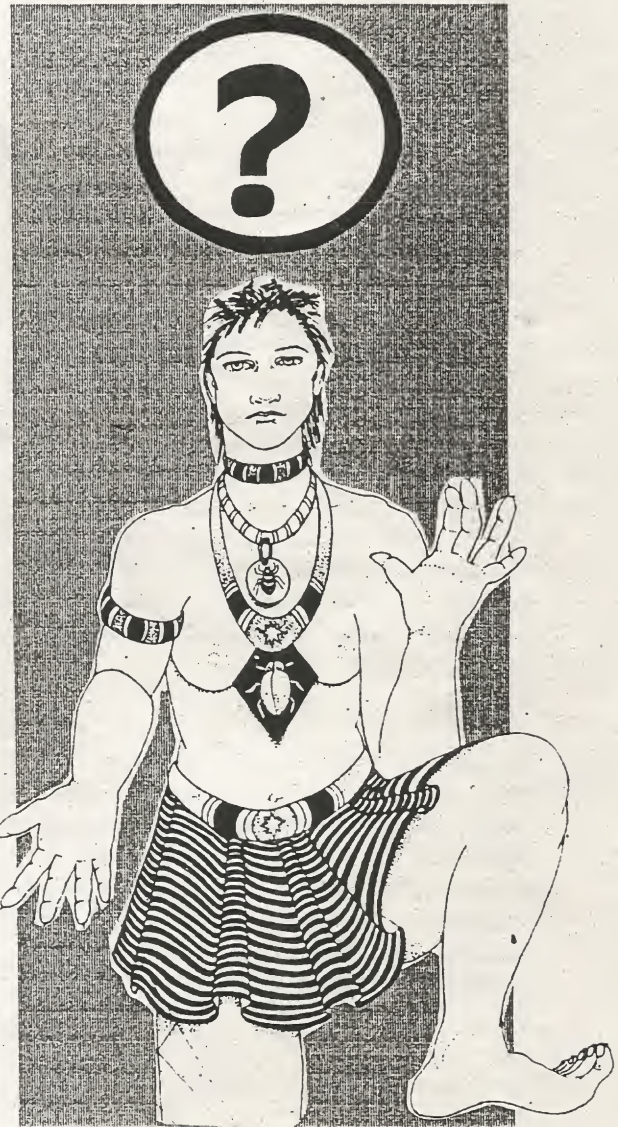
Some ecofeminists believe women are 'closer to nature' than men. In some essential way we are supposed to experience a greater connectedness with the natural world because of our childbearing capacity.

We are thus able to transcend the ugly brutality of industrial patriarchy, having access to a superior set of values characterised by love and consensus. We need only separate ourselves from men and mainstream society, re-discover the goddess within, and get in touch with the Earth Mother's and our own cycles, in order to liberate ourselves.

Our gendered natures are seen as biologically inevitable, rather than as culturally and historically specific. Instead of possessing structural power in patriarchal societies, men are seen as inescapably dominating and aggressive.

Work for social change becomes pointless since gender is seen as something 'essential' and unchangeable rather than socially and culturally constructed. Better to retreat from the nasty world of politics and focus on discovering our true inner selves, 'running with the wolves,' and growing organic cabbages.

I don't mean to put down the celebration of women: of our bodies or of the traditional nurturing roles which have been so thoroughly undervalued by society. But sometimes this celebration equates to little more than an uncritical acceptance of traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Women are still seen as biologically determined beings, but celebrated as creatures that mother, bleed and nurture. Traditional gender categories are not challenged; they are ac-



Of Goddesses and natural women (cont.)

Estrogen and Breast Cancer

cepted and re-valued.

The hierarchical dualisms which have characterised western thought and society for millennia also go unquestioned. In this paradigm difference is exaggerated to provide a justification for hierarchy and exploitation.

Everything/one is seen to fit into an hierarchical category such as man/woman, culture/nature, public/private, mental/manual, rational/emotional; everything is black or white, so to speak. Straight or gay; and unequal.

There are no shades of grey, no continuity or commonality of experience. Real or imagined difference takes on significance as a 'natural' basis for inequality.

Feminist and social justice movements have fought for liberation from social and economic oppression, challenging prejudice based on stereotypes which define who and what we are by things like our gender or the colour of our skin.

By claiming that one gender is inherently more nurturing, aggressive or whatever, we fall into the same essentialism which has served to make housebound slaves of women in the past (and present).

It is ironic that appeals to 'nature' are made to prove women's supposed moral superiority, when the same 'natural' justifications are used to defend patriarchal social arrangements. Appeals to 'nature' to rationalise certain social arrangements are no better than those made to God, when the issue is really one of power.

As well as recognising the parallels between social domination and the exploitation of nature, ecofeminists should challenge the construction of masculine and feminine identities, if they want to avoid providing a new trap for women.

See 'Ecofeminism, Women, and Nature,' by Christine Dann in *Feminist Voices. Women's Studies Texts for Aotearoa/New Zealand*; 'Feminism and Ecofeminism: Beyond the Dualistic Assumptions of Women, Men and Nature,' by Val Plumwood, in *Feminism, Nature, Development* edition of *The Ecologist*, (Jan/Feb 1992); 'Goddess Bothering,' by Karen McMillan in *Broadsheet* (Winter/Hotoke 1995).

Many older women receive hormones on an ongoing basis - either estrogen alone or estrogen with progestin. The medical consensus has been that estrogen may be connected with endometrial cancer, but doesn't contribute to breast cancer. This latter assumption has been challenged by an article in the June 15 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

The article reports on a follow-up of the participants in the Nurses' Health study that began in the late 70's and has been extended to 1992. Analysing the data based on 725,550 person-years, the researchers found that taking estrogen for 5 years or longer significantly raised the women's risk for breast cancer.

That was true whether they took estrogen alone, or estrogen with progestin. The article concluded, "The substantial increase in the risk of breast cancer among older women who take hormones suggests that the trade-off between risks and benefit should be carefully assessed." (*New England Journal of Medicine* 1995; 332:1589-93)



This is a prime example of the medicalization of our society where every phase of human existence, from childbirth to old age becomes a disease to be treated. The rationale for giving estrogen to older women is that it may prevent heart problems and osteoporosis as well as that it suppresses such "symptoms" as hot flushes or minor urinary incontinence. But, as the *NEJM* comments, many women on estrogen have few risk factors for heart disease and a 5-7 year estrogen therapy after menopause will not protect them from osteoporotic fractures years later. As to suppressing hot flushes and similar "symptoms", it's hardly worth the risk of dying of breast cancer!

Reprinted from e-mail received
16 June 1995

by Nais Tempeh

Sekhmet no 9, August 1995

LETTERS

Dear Sekhmet,

I am writing in support of Maria's comments (*Sekhmet* 8) on the third Anarch-fem conference. It seemed to me to combine the worst excesses of third form camp at an exclusive and bitchy girls school with some sort of hippy festival. Honestly, dahlings, if you're not interested in Anarchism and Feminism then **DON'T TURN UP!** (Perhaps an anarchfem summer camp might be more appropriate) It was a shame, as from an organisational viewpoint it was one of the best I have attended, with great workshops, choice food, good timetabling.... Thanks organisers, but next time leave the participants at home.

I wonder whether we should pursue annual conferences. They are usually attended by the same people, more good stuff seems to be achieved outside,

either in local group(s), by being visibly anarcha-feminist in other forums (academia, peace groups, sexuality groups and scenes, performances, *Sekhmet*), and I suspect that the conferences alienate many who are not part of an established scene within the spectrum - how many people non-white, over 25, non - 'alternative' (much as I hate the term) women attend, and of those that do, how many come back?

Also, *Sekhmet*, can you please not have so much reporting on the exploits of the Trollops and Hags? I mean, great that they exist and are doing so much, but issue after issue it reeks of shameless self promotion. There are heaps of other good women doing performance, music, art, which would be worth mentioning. I have a personal gripe about the amount of articles *Sekhmet* has run on witchcraft; there are anarchist women who are Atheists, Christians, or

Mayahana Buddhists who have never been represented in the zine - running something on Witchcraft and Goddess stuff every second issue kind of implies that it is institutionalised within the movement. I think people's spirituality, like their sexuality, is their own affair and continual plugging of one particular brand thereof (I found this a real problem at the 1994 conference) is off-putting and intrusive.

Enough criticism. I really like the debate, and the different viewpoints discussed - zines that only contain one viewpoint are BORING BORING BORING and if reading something makes me angry, it fosters thinking and mental stimulation.

Squawk, KT

(Ed: Dear KT, we will put other viewpoints in when we get articles representing them! Regarding Hags and Random Trollops, we find info about them interesting - hopefully others do too!)



LETTERS



Hello long-lost anarchists! Greetings from Londontown.

I have just wandered through a reclaim the streets/anti pollution/waste demonstration full of travellers, anarchists, punks, youth, Camden Market goers, children. The road was closed off, guarded by reasonably peaceful police; while cars burned, people sat in and celebrated, heaps of 'em.

I visited the '121' bookshop in Brixton yesterday (*Anarchist Bookshop-ED*)- heaps of interesting stuff, especially womyn's zines, comix, I'll send some stuff over. They seem to be a well-organised lot with dinners, gigs, networks, information, and they were holding a paper-making workshop - folks after my own heart. There is still an active squatters movement, a strong anti-Criminal Justice Act movement, travellers travelling around doing stuff. Just last weekend (V.E. Holiday), there was a sit in at Stonehenge in protest of private ownership of land and its misuses - the plight of homelessness in England. There was a tribal gathering/rave near Oxford with over 20,000 people; I'm hoping to get to one in the near future. Spain was great for Anarchist presence, on the streets in the form of graffiti; A's and anti-fascist slogans; stickers on lamp posts, and when I went to a new town or city I would soon spot the red and black flag/CNT/FAI banner flying from a third storey. I think their emphasis is more trade-unions, hard to say, they certainly are hugely well organised/recognised. I'm going to attempt to translate stuff; if I don't, I'll pass it on to Sam and Billie! London is an interesting place to hang out in. The class differences, the huge numbers of people, the huge variety of types

of people - it's all a bit much, really. Bloody expensive, filthy, tube trains are exciting, tho'. It's been really hot and now is cold again; refreshing, as smog count goes up when it's hot. There has been a lot of direct action against road building here, involving all types of people, not just activists in the form of building occupations, tree squats, protest lines in front of dozers, people chaining themselves to the insides of houses. There was 20 billion pounds worth of building planned for the next 10 years, there is now 5 billion due to this action. How is the motorway extension (not) coming along in Wellington? I hope it never comes off! Start that sit-in at Bodega now!

Great that the AAA (*Anarchist Alliance of Aotearoa-ED*) is on the net, and that I have use of a computer. Can you send me Gaye and Cathe's Christchurch address when you reply, and tell me all the latest happenings. I'm off around England, Scotland and Ireland next week with Belinda, a seasoned biker from Dunedin. We plan to zoom all over the place for a month, camping, staying with contacts, doing the backroads rather than boring motorways. I'm going to check out anarchist contacts, and also look for interesting places to spend time in the next while, to escape London. Should be boomer of a month! I'm having a wonderful time just moving around, staying in different places, talking to really interesting/crazy/inspiring people. I even have myself a little job, in a vege restaurant/deli, with great people, and a great local pub, 'The Green Man'. I'm going to the wedding of the Ecuadorian dishwasher to an Irishwoman on Saturday, which should be a cultural outing! Well that's enough

rabbiting on from me. Hope you're all well, inspired, and having fun. Oh yes, the conference sounded successful, well done. In the zine I'll send over (Bad Attitude), they take a bit about the 'Anarchy in the U.K.' conference. As a roving Anarcha-Feminist, I'll keep you posted on my travels.

Till next time, miss you'all.

Love,

Anna Woolhouse.

Hello there

We received your address from Profane Existence. We organised feminist group in our place and want to catch contact with similar group over the world. How about your activities? Did you make any interesting action last time?

There one moment feminist womyn fight for right to own opinion and womyn burning out pornoshops. For me, part of this action is too radical. How about your place?

The Freedom Shop

272 Cuba St.

Wellington/Poneke

Anarchist and Anarcha-Feminist
Books and Crafts

Open Mon- Fri 12 p.m.-6 p.m.

Saturday 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Get a taste of
Anarchy

Sekhmet no 9, August 1995

LETTERS

We've made zine and want to write there about feminist organizations in other countries. By the way, we look for addresses of feminist organizations over the world. Could you send me it, if you have one

Let me know, and write to me.

Take care!

Ola Szreyber
Poland

Dear Katipo Collective and Sekhmet,

I want to reply to Val's letter. I've seen and enjoyed performances by Random Trollops and have been in one ("domestic violence") performance by the Hags.

Personally, I think that saying a white middle-class womyn should not claim to be oppressed is a little narrow. Anti-feminist, even. So only the most oppressed can complain? Mind you, I am writing as a white middle-class womyn here! And who judges? This serves no purpose but division. I thought the skit was excellent, with good humour, and I like the change between 'good girl/nice voice', and 'foul sounding/outspoken one'.

I have also wanted to write how annoyed, angered, and sickened I was by your experiences of homophobia in the anarchist movement. It makes me wonder if we have a 'movement', or just a subculture of dissatisfied individuals. I'd like to finish with a quote from Barbara Smith, from the 'Home Girls' anthology.

THE MYTH: Feminism is nothing but man-hating (and men have never done anything that would legitimately inspire hatred). It is important to make a distinction between attacking institutionalised, system-Sekhmet no 9, August 1995

atic oppression (the goal of any serious progressive movement) and attacking men as individuals... Women's desire for fairness and safety in our lives does not necessitate hating men. Trying to educate and inform men about how their feet are planted on our necks doesn't translate into hatred either.'

VARICOSE zine

Womyn's punk rock, Goddess, womyn's performance, any womyn's music or expression. I need poems, lyrics, photos, reviews of gigs, scene reports, artwork, rants, music for review...

WRITE:

VARICOSE,

P.O. Box 6387 Te Aro,
Wellington, AOTEAROA

Kia kaha
Hellen

(The Sekhmet Collective would like to apologize for Hellen's letter somehow having been left out of Issue 8)

Dear All,

Kia ora to all you most beautiful womyn. Thanks to all the organisers of this year's 1995 Anarcha-

feminist conference in Levin. It was the first one I attended - and I generally enjoyed it. I got to catch up and meet a lot of women coming from different backgrounds etc.....

The workshops - I mostly enjoyed, I would have liked to have had more time for them as they always fell short of time. I also would like in the future to see more action/goal orientated workshops where the workshops create outcomes and where philosophies as a movement are

expanded - as a group, and individually. I would like to think we can be supported by our own group to challenge our own lives by presenting ourselves as a working positive option for society to esteem to. Particularly in areas where there are less Anarcha-feminists living.

I would like to see our movement challenge itself to move beyond our social networks and start broadening out into the broader community.

Thanks to Lou and all the helpers for the great kai. It was great.

I didn't like all the inhouse jokes etc... made at the expense of other womyn; why did these womyn attend the conference? And I felt (myself included) that despite many of us not enjoying such behaviour, we still didn't feel safe enough to speak up about it. It would be good to see this as a topic to work on at the next conference. How can we make the environment safe for each of us to speak our mind and have our viewpoints respected, regardless of difference in them? I support Maria's comments in her letter in the last Sekhmet, and thank her for writing in and expressing them.

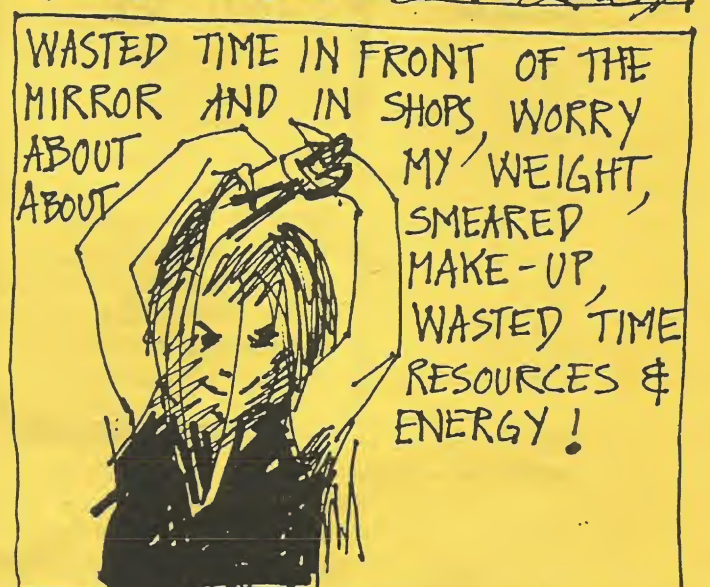
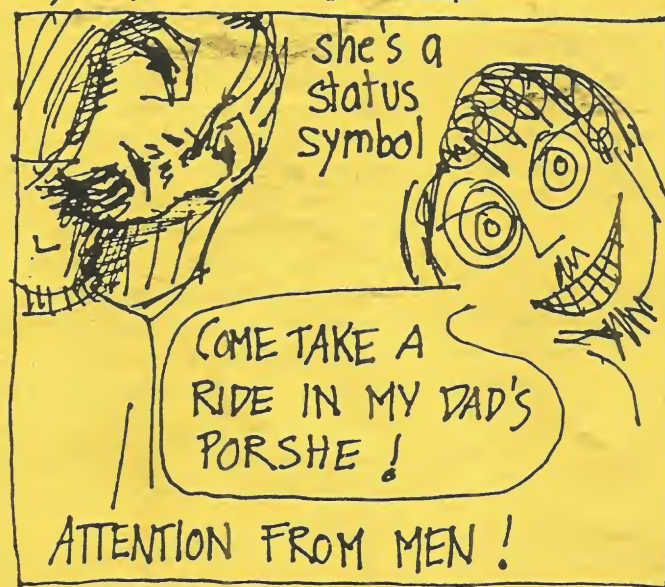
Thanks for all the positive fun energy at the conference brought by so many of the womyn that attended the conference.

Love,
Megan



on of aotearoa

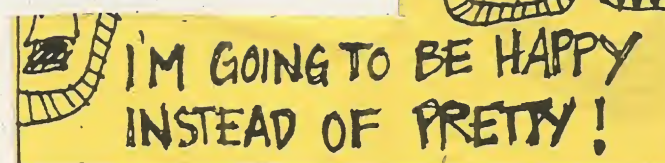
IMPORTANCE OF PRETTY



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AND HORNY INSTEAD OF JUST SEXY!



GAZA